

Soldiers *Online*

Projecting Power in

TWO years ago the Army announced its intent to be able to put a combat-capable brigade anywhere in the world in 96 hours. At about the same time, the staff of U.S. Army, Europe, was working on a very similar goal of its own.

This summer, the concept became an airborne, airland reality.

MAJ Paul Swiergosz is the operations and plans officer for the USAREUR Public Affairs Office in Heidelberg, Germany.

During June's Exercise Lariat Response, the largest power-projection exercise of its kind to date, USAREUR deployed almost a brigade's worth of combat power from bases in Germany and Italy to an objective in Hungary.

The elapsed time from the initial alert to closure on the objective: just over 96 hours.

The exercise, part of the USAREUR Emergency Readiness Deployment Exercise training cycle, began with a warning order to plan and

eventually deploy forces.

The exercise training scenario focused on assistance to a friendly country's armed forces against hostile rebels bent on seizing the country.

When the deployment order came, forces from the Southern European Task Force's 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Vicenza, Italy, secured the Kecskemet Air Base in Hungary following an early morning airborne drop.

Meanwhile, aircraft carrying the

Staff Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo, USAF



The use of prepositioned equipment — such as these M113 armored personnel carriers about to be loaded aboard a C-5 transport at Ramstein Air Base, Germany — helped ensure a rapid deployment for Lariat Response units.

Europe

Story by MAJ Paul Swiergosz

Medium Ready Company from the 1st Infantry Division waited for the signal that the runway had been cleared and the airfield secured.

By the end of the first day, aircraft from Germany, Italy and Charleston, S.C., had flown 25 sorties, shuttling more than 700 soldiers and airmen, 40 wheeled and armored vehicles, and 20 aircraft into Kecskemet.

"What we did demonstrated that we can initially respond with agility, then land a heavy force afterwards in a matter of hours," said COL James C. Yarbrough, commander of SETAF's 173rd Abn. Bde. and of the Immediate Ready Force.

It was the first time USAREUR had ever deployed tanks and Bradleys with the IRF, using C-17 aircraft from Air Mobility Command to land them in Hungary.

The armored vehicles add a powerful dimension of lethality to an already agile force, Yarbrough said.

"This has been a significant step forward, and this capability has evolved over the past few years," he said. "I'll admit, it sure felt good seeing the M1A1 tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles rolling off the C-17s just a few hours after we jumped."

Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (Operations) for USAREUR, COL Clinton T. Anderson, said the IRF mission is to meet the full spectrum of operations from humanitarian assistance to high-intensity combat.

"This is a force that can be tailored to meet any contingency," Anderson said. "Since no one has a crystal ball to see into the future to see the threats ahead, we need to have a ready force capable of meeting any mission at any time."

With an Immediate Ready Company from the 173rd Abn. Bde. forming the nucleus of the IRF, the

USAREUR staff designed force enhancement modules that add different dimensions and capabilities to the force.

Increased communications capabilities, military police augmentation, scout enhancements, and combat forces in the form of light and heavy armor are only a few of the FEMs that have been designed for the IRF.

The modules are then added to the force as needed, based on the mission.

While testing the capabilities of the USAREUR IRF was an integral part of Lariat Response, there was another dimension to the exercise with equal importance: engagement training with NATO partners.

Throughout the exercise, IRF units executed a variety of missions with the Hungarians, who were admitted into



One of four Bradley fighting vehicles flown into Hungary aboard Air Mobility Command C-17 Globemasters moves out after its arrival at Kecskemet Air Base.



Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Inf., secure the area around the transport aircraft that brought in the battalion's M113s and Bradleys.

the NATO alliance in 1999.

The 173rd's Company A, 1st Bn., 502nd Infantry Regiment, teamed up with the Hungarian army's 34th Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon to attack and destroy an "enemy" communications network near the city of Tapolca.

Training to fight together in urban settings, the units capped their operation with a daylong, live-fire exercise.

Task Force 1-63 Armor from the 3rd Bde., 1st Inf. Div., teamed up with recon forces from the Hungarian 1st Cavalry Regt. in a combined arms live-fire exercise at the Taborfalva range complex.

Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, M113 armored personnel carriers, Hungarian scout vehicles and soldiers from both armies joined to fight a final battle against the "rebel" armored brigade.

Simultaneously, 50 kilometers away, American and Hungarian paratroopers jumped from UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. They then exchanged jump wings on the drop zone in a traditional sign of paratrooper brotherhood.

"It's hard to engage with NATO nations if you're at Fort Hood, Texas," Anderson said, stressing USAREUR's unique role in engagement training.

"We have forces at Fort Hood and Fort Stewart, Ga., that are well-trained

SFC David McCrary

Staff Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo, USAF

"This was a great opportunity for us to get out and test our rapid deployment capability and our partnership with U.S. Air Forces, Europe."



SPC Raymond Seguin of Company C, 2nd Bn., 2nd Inf., helps guard the aircraft parking ramp while his Bradley is unloaded at Kecskemet Air Base.

and well-practiced at deploying rapidly.

"But for USAREUR, every day is engagement, with our old and new NATO partners as well as with non-NATO nations, Anderson said. "Since we are already forward-deployed, it's much easier to maintain and sustain contact, especially with the nations we may be working with in the future."

Indeed, as Hungarian and U.S. troops moved and mixed about the ready lines, firing lines, drop zones

and training areas, the camaraderie and pride of being allies instead of adversaries became more and more evident.

Once a part of the "Threat" USAREUR had trained to fight against during the Cold War, Hungarian forces now relish their training opportunities with U.S. forces, Anderson said.

"The morale of the entire army these days is higher than it has ever been," said Maj. Tamas Sandor of the Hungarian 1st Cav. Regt., "Especially among the units able to work with U.S. and other NATO partners."

The Lariat Response series of exercises benefits U.S. forces as well, offering new training opportunities in different environments.

"There are things we can't do at training areas in the U.S. or here in Germany that we can do here," Anderson noted.

"We are able to sustain training proficiency through these engagement activities: training in unfamiliar terrain with new allies, being exposed to new equipment and different doctrine," he said. "We learn, they learn. It's a win-win experience."

Anderson also stressed the importance of using strategic and tactical airlift assets to get the Army into the fight quickly.

"This was a great opportunity for us to get out and test our rapid deployment capability and our partnership with U.S. Air Forces, Europe," Anderson said. "So we can practice deploying anywhere in our theater on short notice to perform whatever duties the European Command commander has designed for his Army and Air Force components."

"Three years ago, the capability did not exist here in Europe to rapidly deploy this type of packaged, tailored force," Anderson explained. "Now all the pieces are here, and we're improv-

CW2 Kurt Steller does a preflight check of his UH-60's tail rotor. His unit — B Trp., 5th Sqdn., 158th Avn. Regt. — deployed from Aviano, Italy, to support the exercise.



ing the product.”

Yarbrough deemed the exercise an unequivocal success.

“You cannot design an exercise with a higher payoff than Lariat Response, in my opinion,” Yarbrough said. “This exercise in just four days gives great training benefit to the lowest ranking private out here, all the way up to the four-star strategic decision makers in this theater.”

The next Lariat Response exercise, scheduled for some time this winter, will again be a no-notice EDRE to a foreign country somewhere in the EUCOM theatre. USAREUR planners are optimistic that they will be able to double the size of the deploying force, using additional FEMs and strategic mobility. □



SFC David McCrary

Training in an unfamiliar area has its advantages, as exercise planners were able to surprise members of the USAREUR IRF, including this 1st Armored Div. soldier, with unforeseen challenges.



SFC David McCrary

COL James C. Yarbrough, IRF commander during Lariat Response, pins his jump wings on his Hungarian counterpart after the joint jump.

USAREUR's Ready Force

THE Immediate Ready Force was established to improve USAREUR's ability to rapidly respond to potential contingencies within the European Command's area of responsibility.

The cornerstone of the IRF is the Light Immediate Ready Company from the 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment, in Vicenza, Italy. This airborne force is deployable within 24 hours and can be quickly reinforced with additional units from SETAF's 173rd Brigade.

The remainder of the IRF is tailored into force enhancement modules that add specific capabilities in the form of combat power, communications, military police, engineers, scouts, and tactical or strategic control assets.

The FEMs can deploy separately or together, based on the mission, to provide a capable, tailorable and integrated force.

Combat power ranges from the Medium Ready Company, equipped with M113 armored personnel carriers, to the Heavy Immediate Ready Company, equipped with M1A1 tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

Key to the mobility of the IRF is its ability to deploy using tactical airlift assets already available in the European theater, belonging to U.S. Air Forces Europe. Every IRF FEM is C-130 deployable, with the exception of the HIRC, which requires heavy-lift capability in the form of C-17 or C-5A transport aircraft.

The successful partnership between USAREUR and USAFE, working together to meet the needs of the EUCOM commander, has been an essential part of the development and employment of the IRF.

Also key to the readiness and rapid deployment of the IRF is the prepositioning of equipment at the Deployment Processing Center.

Located at Rhine Ordnance Barracks, the DPC stocks complete equipment sets for the FEMs, maintaining them at a 100 percent readiness rate.

The location of ROB, adjacent to Ramstein Air Base, the primary aerial port of embarkation in Germany's Central Region, helps speed the delivery of IRF personnel and equipment anywhere they are needed. — MAJ Paul Swiergosz



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